

Women's  
Economic Security  
+  
Workforce Development  
in Greater Birmingham

SUMMER 2015



THE WOMEN'S FUND  
OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM



# Women's Economic Security + Workforce Development in Greater Birmingham

The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham is a local nonprofit organization dedicated to helping women and their children move beyond poverty. Our mission is to create positive change for women and their children through collaboration, grantmaking, and advocacy.

The Women's Fund supports post-secondary education and job skills training for low-income women to help prepare them for jobs in growing sectors of Birmingham's business community.

To amplify each woman's success in these opportunities, The Women's Fund is directing its dollars towards collaborative community partnerships that combine educational support with economic support for women and their children, including quality child care, housing, and mentors.

## The numbers: how bad is it?

In the five counties of the Greater Birmingham Area—Blount, Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair, and Walker—28.4% of households with children are female-headed households, meaning a woman is the sole provider for the household<sup>i</sup>.

According to Census data from 2013, **44.4% of female-headed households with children in our five counties are living in poverty**. Comparing the median annual income of female-headed families to the average living wage estimates for a single worker with two children in our area reveals even graver numbers.

Despite average earnings amounting to less than estimated living wages, female householders are an active part of the Greater Birmingham Area's workforce. **82.7% of female householders with children are a part of the labor force in our five-county area.**

When comparing underemployed workers—workers in occupations that underutilize their experience, training, and skills—to the overall workforce in the area, **more underemployed workers are female, unmarried, and are willing to train for a better job<sup>ii</sup>.**

	<b>LIVING WAGE</b> (Annual income needed to support single earner household with two children under 18*)	<b>MEDIAN INCOME</b> (Median annual income of female-headed households with own children under 18**)
United States	\$58,680	\$24,349
Alabama	\$49,044	\$18,948
Blount County	\$52,197	\$19,071
Jefferson County	\$52,104	\$21,733
Shelby County	\$51,891	\$30,250
St. Clair County	\$52,122	\$18,448
Walker County	\$47,457	\$17,373

Living wages are calculated by considering the income a working adult needs to meet her and her dependents' basic needs and expenses—housing, groceries, childcare, taxes, etc.—without public or private assistance.

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\*From Wider Opportunities for Women, Economic Security Database BEST Index

\*\*From US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2009-2013 5-year estimates

The future of Alabama's economy depends on strengthening the female work force.

Increasing post-secondary educational opportunities will better facilitate greater economic opportunities for women in the labor force. Over half (54.6%) of female householders living below the poverty line in Greater Birmingham have attained a high school degree or less.









**As educational attainment among women rises, poverty rates decline.** With some college or an associate degree, the poverty rate of female householders in Greater Birmingham drops to 12.6% and with a bachelor's degree or higher, it shrinks to 2.2%.

The future for children of female householders also brightens with their mother's educational attainment. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, **the best indicator of the economic and educational success of a child is the educational attainment level of the mother.**<sup>iii</sup>

**The availability of quality, affordable child care is also critical for female householders to better contribute to the needs of Greater Birmingham's workforce.** Although subsidies help some women that are eligible, many families struggle to pay for the high cost of child care.

In 2013, child-care costs in Central Alabama averaged over \$6,000 per child for one year of child care. For female-headed families generating an income just over the maximum poverty threshold and paying out-of-pocket for child care, the family is at greater risk of falling into financial instability.

## Where are the jobs?

The current job market shows there is a high demand for workers with post-secondary education in our five-county area. The 2020 occupational projections in the 2014 Alabama State of the Workforce Report for our region indicate that future jobs will require post-secondary education and training, with 32 of the 40 high demand occupations requiring an associate degree or higher.

**Health care/social assistance and manufacturing are two of the top five job providing industries in our region** and the only top industries to pay more than the monthly average across all the industries in the region. The health care/social assistance industry is the leading employer with 70,831 jobs in the fourth quarter of 2014.<sup>vi</sup>

Considering our region's workforce demands and the current economic realities for female-headed families in Greater Birmingham, **The Women's Fund seeks to connect workforce development and educational program providers to female householders** eager for new job opportunities and upward mobility in their careers. Many introductory healthcare and manufacturing jobs are well-paying and require an associate degree or less, with opportunities for career and educational advancement with job experience.

The Women's Fund is currently investing in collaborative programs that prepare single mothers for in-demand



Pharmacy Technician, Vision Care Assistant, and Certified Medical Assistant occupations. In addition to continuing and expanding these programs, The Women's Fund is interested in moving more women into traditionally male-dominated fields, such as industrial maintenance and manufacturing, where the hourly wages are typically higher.

HIGH DEMAND OCCUPATIONS (that make 70% more or higher than the median income of female-headed households with children and require an associate's degree or less <sup>v</sup> )	MEAN ANNUAL SALARY
Wholesale and Manufacturing Sales Representatives*	\$68,452
Registered Nurses*	\$60,622
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers*	\$51,641
Computer Support Specialists*	\$50,458
Occupational Therapist Assistants*	\$50,317
Industrial Machinery Mechanics*	\$46,426
Physical Therapist Assistants*	\$46,337
Dental Hygienists	\$44,406
Drywall and ceiling tile installers*	\$43,333
Heating, AC, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	\$39,374
Computer-Controlled Machine Tool Operators, Metal and Plastic	\$38,983

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\*Experienced annual salary (not included in chart) of living wage or higher



## The Women's Fund + Collaboration Institute

The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham has become the new face of philanthropy in Birmingham through their collaborative work to help single mothers and their children move into economic security while also increasing and developing a skilled workforce for Greater Birmingham.

**The Women's Fund is invested in a two-generation approach: empowering both mother and child to move beyond poverty** by providing educational and economic opportunities for a mother and her child at the same time. Implementing a two-generation model aims to break the generational cycle of poverty by providing the education essential for a mother to move into a higher wage job while simultaneously ensuring that the child is placed in a quality child care center.

In order to stretch each dollar to its fullest potential, The Women's Fund turns to leading organizations and corporations in the Greater Birmingham community who work with low-income women and/or children and are interested in collaborating.

In 2013, The Women's Fund organized its first Collaboration Institute, an innovative initiative to encourage corporate, private, nonprofit, and government sectors to build successful and sustaining partnerships to assist Alabama's women and their children out of generational poverty while also addressing Greater Birmingham's workforce needs. Five collaborative teams completed a nine-month Institute and competed for the two top awards. The two winning collaborators received \$25,000 in seed money and a paid intern for one year to further develop their collaborative ventures.

## 2013 COLLABORATION INSTITUTE WINNERS

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama Collaboration in Healthcare Award (\$25,000)	The Vulcan Materials Company and Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham Innovation in the Community Collaboration Award (\$25,000)
<b><i>Pharmacy Technician Training Program</i></b>	<b><i>Permanent Address Program</i></b>
Jefferson State Community College, St. Clair County Head Start, and First United Methodist Church of Pell City	Habitat for Humanity of Greater Birmingham and United Way of Central Alabama
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare single mothers for Pharmacy Technician jobs.</li> <li>• Provide quality, educational child care for the children of these mothers.</li> <li>• Teach the certification course at Head Start, eliminating the need for transportation between college and child care.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the economic security of families by assisting single mothers moving into homeownership.</li> <li>• Offer savings accounts with matching funds to contribute to home payments.</li> <li>• Refer single mothers to work development programs to increase employment.</li> </ul>





In addition to these top two awards, the other three finalist teams received \$15,000 to pursue their collaborations. The top 2 winners, Jefferson State Community College/St. Clair Head Start/Pell City United Methodist Church/Alabama Career Center and United Way of Central Alabama/Greater Birmingham Habitat for Humanity have sustained their collaborative projects to date.

Trish Hoover, Vice President of Community Initiatives and Programs at United Way of Central Alabama says this of their collaboration: "Habitat for Humanity and UWCA combined resources and streamlined systems to increase the number of women owning Habitat homes, fully utilizing the IDA funds, receiving financial counseling and preparing for alternative home ownership options.

Prior to the collaboration, hundreds of women were declined for Habitat homes each year, with no outreach or alternatives offered. Through *Permanent Address*, United Way proactively contacts pended/declined applicants, offering programs to help move towards owning a home of their own – whether it be a Habitat home or another affordable housing solution. The collaboration dramatically increased the number of women owning homes, on the path to homeownership and utilizing the IDA program."

The Women's Fund's second Collaboration Institute began in 2015. At the first session in June, Anne Mosle, executive director of Ascend at the Aspen Institute, issued the keynote address and several industry leaders in two-generation collaboration and economic security lead workshops for participants to consider in the formulation of their collaborations.

Seven collaborative teams have been selected to continue through the Institute to develop and implement their collaborative strategies in 2016. The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham intends to continue its initiative as a facilitator of collaboration in our community.

These collaborations simultaneously increase the economic stability of single mothers and their families and strengthen the workforce of Greater Birmingham, ensuring a truly greater Birmingham for us all.

## Endnotes

<sup>i</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all statistics in this white paper are from the US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2009-2013 5-year estimates.

<sup>ii</sup>State of the Workforce Report VIII: Region 4, 2015. Pg 9.

<sup>iii</sup>Child Trends and Center for Health Research, 2004. Early Child Development in Social Context. Data from K. Denton, E. Germino-Hausken, and J. West, America's Kindergartners, NCES 2000-070, Washington, DC. U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics, 2000.

<sup>iv</sup>Childcare Resources Annual Report 2012-2013.

<sup>v</sup>High Demand Occupations and their mean annual salary as reported in the State of the Workforce Report VIII: Region 4, 2014, and the median annual income of female-headed households with children as reported in the US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2009-2015 5-year estimates.

<sup>vi</sup>State of the Workforce Report IX: Region 4, 2015. Pg 11.

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